

Gaelic Football

Louth without O'Connor for 2018

EMAM DONOGHUE

Newly appointed Louth manager Pete McGrath will be without the services of Eoin O'Connor for the 2018 season.

The St Patrick's clubman was Louth's top scorer from play in this year's championship with 2-2 in three games. After earning league promotion to Division Two, Meath ended Louth's Leinster ambitions before Longford knocked them out of the qualifiers in late June.

O'Connor's performance in the first-round win over Wicklow was described by then manager Colin Kelly as "immense. He's an outstanding talent."

Kelly's replacement will have to make do without that talent however, with the 25-year-old attacker having departed for Asia (and then Australia) earlier this week.

Travelling

"I'm doing some travelling around southeast Asia to start off my trip," O'Connor told *The Irish Times*. "I'll hopefully do that for eight weeks or so and then on to Melbourne in the new year. I always wanted to backpack, my girlfriend is now qualified as a teacher and she always wanted to do it too, and my best friend had just returned.



■ Eoin O'Connor: was Louth's top scorer from play in 2017 championship

So the stories were all good and encouraging.

"I had some good experience working in banking from before I left – and I was on a short-term contract – so I felt the time was right. The club football was over early unfortunately so I had no commitments there – Aoife understood the football situation so we organised to go once it was all over. I hope to go for a year and if everything works out with work etc we'll see what happens then."

Within the off-season managerial merry-go-round, Kelly has moved on and taken the Westmeath job, while McGrath fills the Louth vacancy after four years with Fermanagh. O'Connor predicts that the two-time All-Ireland winning manager with Down will have a positive impact on a talented squad.

"I think the new management will do well this year," said the former Sigerson Cup winner and scholarship recipient with DCU.

"Colin [Kelly] had a successful term, I don't think anyone can doubt that. Two promotions back to back, he's a good manager and I have a lot of time for him."

"I missed the first league promotion because I was away at the time, but I really enjoyed the journey this year. It's always good putting the county jersey on, and I enjoyed my football again – which is why we should be playing."

"We didn't have a good championship this summer and I'm not sure why, maybe Pete will be able to tweak one or two things and the boys might get some joy. There is certainly a great squad there and some good characters and friends."

GAA/GPA Hurling All Stars



Galway equal their record haul with seven awards



Ian O'Riordan

Waterford next best with five as team is divided between four counties

The maroon redemption is now complete. Galway collecting seven All Star hurling awards, and with that equalling their previous best haul of 1988 when they last won the All-Ireland.

Beaten All-Ireland finalists Waterford are next best represented with five awards, their most successful spread since 2007 when they also lost the final. The remaining three positions are between Cork (two) and Tipperary (one).

Jointly presented by the

GAA/GPA, and sponsored by PwC, four of the Galway recipients are first-time All Stars: defenders Padraic Mannion and Gearóid McInerney, unquestionably the centre back of the season, and forwards Conor Whelan and Conor Cooney.

In helping to bridge that 29-year gap Galway also see Joe Canning selected at centre forward for what is his fourth All Star, while David Burke, the All-Ireland final man-of-the-match, collects his fourth All Star at midfield.

Full back Daithi Burke gets his third award, having also won the previous two years, his ownership of the full back position this summer one of the central reasons why Galway were crowned champions.

All-conquering year

So with that Galway equal the seven All Star winners from the team that won the Liam MacCarthy Cup back in 1988, and the awards don't finish there: Canning is also a nomination for Hurler of the Year, and Whelan Young Hurler of the Year, those winners to be announced live at tomorrow evening's banquet along with the 2017 football All

Star recipients.

It also rounds off an all-conquering year for manager Micheál Donoghue's team, which also saw Galway win the Leinster hurling title and the Allianz Hurling League, plus the county's fifth All-Ireland in all.

Waterford goalkeeper Stephen O'Keeffe is also a first-time recipient, indeed Waterford's first ever goalkeeping

Out of position

Munster champions Cork find their two recipients at wing back in Mark Coleman, a first-time winner, and at corner forward in Patrick Horgan, a previous winner in 2013. Coleman is also in contention for Young Hurler of the Year.

Padraic Maher from Tipperary collects his fifth award at wing back, leaving him just one behind Tipperary all-time winners Nicky English and Eoin Kelly, who have six each.

As often happens, some players are effectively named out of position. Mannion, for example, was selected at corner back, where he played before, despite operating most of this season at wing back. It also

winner, beating off Cork's Anthony Nash in the process. Noel Connors gets his third award in the full back line, Jamie Barron, up for Hurler of the Year, collects his second successive award at midfield, and Michael "Brick" Walsh get his fourth award, named at wing forward (having previously won at midfield in 2007 and centre back in 2009 and 2010).

Kevin Moran, the final contender for Hurler of the Year, gets the other wing forward po-

sition for Waterford, having previously won in 2012.

Waterford might well have had more: Tadhg de Búrca was a strong contender for a defensive position, as indeed was Conor Gleeson, before he missed the All-Ireland final through suspension (he is a contender for Young Hurler of the Year). No room either for Austin Gleeson, last year's Hurler of the Year.

Not entertained

The week before the nation was most certainly not entertained by the Donegal senior football final between Kilcar and Naomh Conaill. Perhaps fearing the worst, TG4 decided against showing it live, but the 0-7 to 0-4 scoreline reverberated around the country nevertheless.

The victors, Kilcar, could I'm sure not care less about the criticism, and as Ryan McHugh mentioned on Newstalk last week, when the teams played in 2016 the game finished 5-10 to 1-11, so they were certainly capable of being better. But if a county final is to truly be a representation of how that entire county feels about the game, and how their club teams set up accordingly, then maybe it's no surprise to see a Donegal final finish 0-7 to 0-4 to the winners.

The club game in a county should be a representation of how their intercounty team plays. In the past players were products of their clubs, which made intercounty teams products of their county championship.

Jim McGuinness once

Second Opinion

Ciarán Murphy



Kilkenny and Donegal finals true to counties' style of play

Being over 18 and accompanied at the time by an adult, I was watching – as allowed watch – the Kilkenny county hurling final on TG4 last Sunday. It was a superb game, and Dicksboro were fully deserving winners of their first county title in 24 years.

If I was a Kilkenny hurling person I could hardly have asked for a better showcase of the game in the county because it was precisely that. It wasn't just a great match, but a match that demonstrated exactly how they feel hurling should be played.

The referee's sole job appeared to be to alert the ambulance if someone's head (or part thereof) got temporarily separated from their body – other than that it was Cody-Ball, and it was open season. The game wasn't particularly dirty, but it was insanely physical. I surely wasn't the only one watching it thinking "is it any wonder they are the way they are?"

Every player who got the ball in his hand knew that it was probably best to get his retaliation in first, so up went the elbow and arm into their challenger's face. Don't turn around hoping for a free because it more than likely wasn't coming.

Pulling a jersey might get you a yellow card, but standing toe-to-toe and hammering your man into the middle of next week was fair game. The entire 60 minutes was full of physical questions – only when they were answered could you go about winning the game. That there were eight goals in total, at least six of them gems, in a game of such unrelenting intensity only underscored the quality on show.

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copped a bit of flak for suggesting that the reason Donegal footballers hand-passed the ball so much was because all of their pitches were beside the sea, which produced footballers happier keeping possession than kicking the ball away.

I seem to recall scoffing at the idea until I realised plenty of the pitches I played on in Connemara were nowhere near the sea. Yet on my holidays through Kilcar, Glencolumille, and Downings there they were, pitches perched a well-hit 45 from the Atlantic Ocean and at the mercy of the elements.

Geography

That a county's geography could shape how they play the game is an interesting idea, but more often than not a county's preferred style is based on philosophical rather than physical parameters.

Hence that line that stuck around for years as Tipperary waited in vain for their next All-Ireland after 1971 – that they hadn't won one since the



The club game in a county should be a representation of how their intercounty team plays

GAA brought in helmets.

Nowadays intercounty managers have so much time on their hands with their players that they can remould their teams in their own personal vision. If an intercounty team is successful enough then it can even start working in reverse – the top players go back to their clubs, take into account what's worked at the top level, and have a huge influence on how their teams line out.

For all that, you see the comfort that Donegal footballers in Kilkenny have with playing in a style that would be immediately familiar to their followers, and it becomes clear that the most successful intercounty managers will find a way to marry their own philosophy to the game as it is traditionally played in a place.

That's why Jim McGuinness and Brian Cody were pushing through an open door in many ways in getting the best from their counties, and why they'll go down without question as their greatest ever managers.

Even taking into account how the game evolves every few years, when the origin of your county team's style of play under a manager becomes a question of the chicken or the egg, you're probably on to a winner.

Hurling All Stars 2017 Player-by-player

1 Stephen O'Keeffe (Waterford) Waterford's first ever goalkeeping All Star. Pulled off some stunning saves through the summer, including a barely believable double-stop against Cork.

2 Padraig Mannion (Galway) Possibly unlucky to miss out on the shortlist for Hurler of the Year. The epitome of Galway's physical edge in defence and a player who has grown in influence for them year on year since 2015.

3 Daithi Burke (Galway) No major competition for this spot. Burke was the steel beam on which the rest of the Galway team was built, immovable and unerring. An All Star for the third year in a row.

4 Noel Connors (Waterford) Another decision that presumably didn't detain the selectors for any longer than it took to write his name. Best corner-back in the game and one of the few Waterford players to shine in the All-Ireland final.

5 Padraic Maher (Tipperary) His fifth All Star. A consistent leader for Tipperary, along with his defensive duties, scored in every game from wing-back.

6 Gearoid McInerney (Galway) Sorted out a long-standing and confounding problem for Galway at centre-back. His dominating performance in the semi-final against Tipperary was the stand-out display.

7 Mark Coleman (Cork) Lit up the early part of the summer with his pinpoint distribution from wing-back. Always looked to have time on the ball and used it to put a name on it.

8 Jamie Barron (Waterford) The indefatigable engine at the heart of the Waterford team. Revelled in the spaces that opened up when others tired in the Kilkenny and Cork games. Will surely go close for Hurler of the Year.

9 David Burke (Galway) Another Galway player collecting his third All Star in a row, this is his fourth in total. Consistently to the fore all year, he was terrific in the All-Ireland series.

10 Kevin Moran (Waterford) Popped up so many times when Waterford needed him. Scored goals against Wexford and Galway and kept Waterford alive when the stakes were high and the chances were rare early on against Cork.

11 Joe Canning (Galway) Worth it for those last 20 minutes against Tipperary alone, when he was the only Galway player to score, including that immortal winner.

12 Michael Walsh (Waterford) His fourth All Star, seven years and a heap of positional switches after his third. His reinvention as a ball-winner/facilitator/general dogsboddy in the Waterford attack has been a major success.

13 Conor Whelan (Galway) Nailed on for Young Hurler of the Year, even though the All-Ireland final didn't go his way. Had a scintillating year up to that point, with the semi-final against Tipp a masterclass.

14 Conor Cooney (Galway) A constant threat in the skies above the Galway full-forward line. Seven points from play in the Leinster final, another four in the All-Ireland – he gave them a focal point and an out-ball every time.

15 Patrick Horgan (Cork) A great comeback year for the sharp-shooting Cork inside forward. Put on exceptional show in defeat against Waterford, building on an excellent Munster championship.

Malachy Clerkin

Briefs

Tennis

Nadal victory ensures he will end season as world number one

Rafael Nadal ensured he will end the 2017 season ranked as the world number one after a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Chung Hyeon at the Paris Masters. It is the fourth time the 31-year-old has achieved the feat having previously finished 2008, 2010 and 2013 on top.

This has been a remarkable season for Nadal, who bounced back from wrist problems last year to win his 15th and 16th grand slam titles at the French Open and US Open.

"I'm very, very happy for everything," Nadal told Sky Sports. "It has been an amazing year. One year ago



■ Rafael Nadal: fourth time to end year on top of rankings

for sure I never dreamed about being world No1 at end of the season so it's something that means a lot."

Roger Federer's withdrawal from the Paris tournament meant Nadal needed only one win to guarantee his great rival could not catch him.

Athletics – Dublin Marathon

O'Hanlon champion as Sittuk fails to meet residency criteria

Athletics Ireland have revised the result of the national marathon championships, incorporated into Sunday's Dublin marathon, and declared Gary O'Hanlon the winner.

O'Hanlon had finished second behind Kenyan-born runner Freddy Sittuk, but a meeting of the Competition Committee of Athletics Ireland decided that Sittuk had failed to meet the required criteria for eligibility under the residency rule.

This follows the receipt of information from Sittuk's club Raheny Shamrock. Sittuk was confirmed as eligible by his club prior to



■ Gary O'Hanlon: believed he was champion on the day

the event when, in fact, he hadn't spent the required "unbroken" six months in the country – he had returned to his native Kenya in the weeks before Dublin.

O'Hanlon had claimed all along that he believed he was champion on the day.

Rugby

Conway gets one-week ban but is available for Ireland

Munster's Adrew Conway has received a one-week suspension by a Pro14 disciplinary panel following his red card in last Friday's defeat to Connacht.

It means the winger will not miss Ireland's opening November Test against South Africa which takes place at the Aviva stadium on Saturday week.



■ Adrew Conway: shown red card by Nigel Owens

Conway was shown a red card by referee Nigel Owens for a late hit on Connacht's Jack Carty and, following a disciplinary panel meeting in Edinburgh yesterday, he has received a suspension of one week.

Results round-up

Baseball

WORLD SERIES – Game Six: Los Angeles Dodgers 3 Houston Astros 1 (Series tied at 3-3).

Basketball

NBA – Brooklyn Nets 114 Phoenix Suns 122, Indiana Pacers 101 Sacramento Kings 83, Milwaukee Bucks 91 Oklahoma City Thunder 110, LA Lakers 113 Detroit Pistons 93.

Cricket

FIRST TWENTY20 INTERNATIONAL In Delhi: **India 202-3** (S Dhawan 80, R G Sharma 80), **New Zealand 148-8**. **India beat New Zealand by 53 runs.** **SECOND TEST (Fourth Day)** In Bulawayo: **Zimbabwe 326** (H Masakadza 147, Sikandar Raza 80, P J Moor 52) & **140-4** (Sikandar Raza 58 no.), **West Indies 448** (J O Holder 110, S O Dowric 103, K O A Powell 80, Sikandar Raza 5-9).

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